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ABSTRACT

Using data extracted from an international study, the 1988 IEA Preprimary Study Phase I, this study examined the number of hours a Nigerian child and an American child each spends with different caregiving adults on a typical day. The focus of the study was on the parents' commitment of time to child care. Results show that out of the 16 hours an average child is awake, the typical child in the Nigerian and American sample spends most of his or her time with the mother. The typical American child spends 10 hours and 42 minutes with the mother, while the average Nigerian father and the average American father each spends less than one hour with the child. In the American context, the teacher spends more time with the child than the father; in the Nigerian context, the nanny spends more time with the child than the father. The results support the argument that the traditional child care pattern should change, and recommend the development of family-responsive policies and actions. Recommended policies include employer-support activities and direct government intervention to facilitate the reorganization of child care in families so that mothers, whether working at home or in the public domain, will enjoy a more fulfilled life. (SM)

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Division of Labor in Child Care
A Cross Cultural Analysis

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Abstract

Division of Labor in Child Care: A Cross-Cultural Analysis

In these post modern times, labor force participation for adult women has become the model pattern in many societies. Does this mean that there is a shift in traditional divisions of labor in the household? Who is the parent in charge of child care? Surveys conducted in American and Nigerian households provide the following data. While fathers spend less than one hour (42 minutes) per day in child care, mothers, in both cultural contexts, spend more than 12 hours in child care during the day. More than 50% of mothers in the sample are employed full-time and must combine productive roles in the labor force, at the same time as they fulfill productive roles within the family. "Mother-monopolized child rearing" could be unhealthy from the psychological standpoint for the parents and child; even when mothers are not in the public labor force. Redistribution of child care duties to accommodate fathers and other responsible adults and agencies is recommended in order to improve the quality of life for the mother, the father, the child and the society in general.

Division of Labor in Child Care: A Cross-Cultural Analysis

Gergen, in an interview describes life in past modern times, as involving men and women, operating the overloaded day, forging impersonal relationships through faxes, electronic mail and computer bulletin boards, under the condition termed "multiphrenia". According to him, "man is stretched out all over the place panting from a race that never seems to be over". Even in this multiphrenic period, division of labor in the household is still along gender lines. Gove postulates that sex specific roles operate as work family roles. The sex specific roles are of husband/wife, father/mother, worker/housewife. Gove et al., explained further that marital role expectations differ for men and women. While married women could be confined to the single role of housewife, married men are blessed with two roles--worker and husband. Married men therefore enjoy two sources of potential gratification--the family and work. This is more so as economists have described division of labor in a framework, that characterizes men's work as in the public domain, as wage generating, as hierarchical and as enjoying the rewards and sanctions of organizations.

On the other hand, the economists' conceptualization of 'work' is not an application in the household where the division of labor is informal, where the work activities are unpaid, and where the behavior and responsibilities are governed by rarely defined internal values, sanctions and rewards. The demands of household work impinge more strongly on women. Gove added that housework is perceived as unstructured and involving boring repetitive tasks that require little skill. It affords minimal prestige and (worse still); it isolates the housewife from adult peers. The housewife's work role affords women only one source of potential gratification--the family; whereas a married man if frustrated in one role can switch to another for gratification.

Even when women occupy the same marital and employment status as men, they have the major responsibility of maintaining the family's welfare, particularly child care. Most societies still hold to the gender role for women. It is natural for women to do child care work, and that they will and should make themselves available to do it--unpaid. This deeply entrenched traditional attitude survives despite warnings against gender-typing that often leads to gender stereotypes. For women, in many cultures, the enactment of work family roles often conflict with structured-

work roles impeding women's success in the occupational realm. No wonder Felice Schwartz published an article in the Harvard Business Review recommending different tracking (concerning training and promotion) in the work place for women who have familial commitments. It is within these characteristics of sex specific family roles that fathers have tended to regard themselves as a peripheral figure in the household, especially in the case of child care.

Noralee Frankel, in her summary of the session "Family Structure and Women's Roles" at the fourth conference of the Association of Black Women Historians' included women's roles as mothers, wives and daughters as important topics for further research. This paper provides literature and statistics that would sensitize men and women to the need for actions that will redistribute child care tasks in the family. Specifically, the paper examines divisions of labor in child care, between mothers and fathers and other caregivers. (Child care is defined as the average time an adult spends interacting with a child in a care setting.) It prescribes what policy makers, employers of labor, women's organizations, women activists, men and women, irrespective of social class and geographic locale, need to do to redistribute the present imbalance in child care tasks. This paper is relevant at this time as it lends credence to Erickson, Klein and Floge's observation that the presence of children under the age of six years remains a strong deterrent to women's labor force participation.

Child Care in Contexts

In the home child care involves a double helix, two sets of needs that are separate but intertwined. The two aspects are: (1) Financial: since material goods and health services are rarely absolutely free, resources must be available to maintain and promote adequate child health and welfare.

(2) Time and Attention: child care involves spending quality time (feeding, teaching, bathing, etc.) with the child.

The historical evolution of black families in Africa and elsewhere follows similar patterns in that black women have been active in the labor force. Despite this trend, traditionally, fathers have ascribed to themselves the more visible role of economic provider, the bread winner; even when

the mother is also using her income to meet some domestic responsibilities. The question is, 'has women's active involvement in income generating activities reduced their sex specific family tasks?'

Research literature is replete with findings that suggest gender distinctions in home making roles. Genovese and Gutman found that although sex specific social roles are becoming less rigid among black American families, research findings do not suggest equality in work-family responsibilities. Broman found that gender differences, in regards to contributions in household work, indicates that black women continue to perform the majority of the traditional chores and are more likely than men to feel overworked. Casenaze also reported that the role of economic provider was the frequently cited familial role among African American middle class fathers and blue-collar black men. To emphasize this point; 1988 data from the U.S. Census Bureau shows that 50% of all black children in the U.S. live with single mothers. Data from the 1981 National Survey of Children reported that almost half of the children in single mother homes had not seen their fathers in the previous year and only 1/6th of them saw their father as often as once a week. Again, the incidence of single father families among African Americans is very low; only 2% of black American children lived in such households in 1980.

In a relevant but indirect way, one may refer to Gilder's statement as cited by Eisenstein. Gilder, while articulating the problem welfare creates for family structure said, "Welfare benefits destroy the role of the father. He can no longer feel manly in his own home. In welfare culture, money becomes not something earned by men but a right conferred on women by the state. The male role [financial provider in the home] has been cuckolded by the compassionate state." Gilder went further to recommend that the first priority of any serious program against poverty is to strengthen the male role in poor families. Such point of view emphasizes the traditional role of men as financial providers only. It often excuses the father from child care duties especially when there is a dearth of evidence showing that child care is labor.

Child Care in the African Context

Among African households division of labor is less egalitarian. The roles of the married

women are not always consistently defined. Even though most women are employed outside the home, (whether on the farms or in the markets) their responsibilities in the home, typically are unchanged. Unlike their sisters in developed countries they have no access to economic support from the state or even gadgets that reduce the tension of child care and housework.

In rural settings it is common for mothers to work with the child strapped to her back. In other instances, child care is delegated to women in the mother's extended family structure. Mothers rarely require the fathers to be involved in such responsibilities. Obadina noted in this context, that to excuse men from housework is virtuous; especially among more traditionally-inclined women who see the male person as "sacrosanct".

In an interesting study conducted among Nigerian families by Aluko and Alfa, time allocations by gender in four elite and non-elite families were compared. The average time allocated by the four wives to household and child care tasks (220 + 180 + 150 + 285) is 835 minutes. The average time expended by the four husbands in household tasks is zero for each of them. In meeting social obligations, such as games and clubs, the two elite husbands spent 480 minutes on such pursuits while their wives spent zero minutes. The researchers concluded that exploitation of women in Nigeria, is not a class phenomenon but a gender phenomenon;---it would take a radical social shift in sex-role concepts to define child care as appropriate for any responsible adult.

McAdoo and Were reported, in a study of professional women in Kenya, that even though the women in their sample assumed demanding professional roles; they continue to perform roles very similar to those of the rural women--mother, household supervisor, worker. Kenyan husbands report that they are not as involved with children. The women report that men continue their grandfather's pattern of meeting male friends in beer halls and bars after work (like their Nigerian counterparts) and often do not return home until long after the children are asleep. Women in other parts of Africa have similar experiences. Although literature shows similar patterns of family sex role divisions among African and African American households, many of the studies deal with household chores, in general, and not child care. Thus data rarely exists that

shows the average number of hours each parent expends on child care and the locale of care. This study fills the gap. An important consideration is the impact of environmental influences on behavioral development. Since there is cultural and technological distance between families in Africa and the United States, this study speculates that there will be a difference in the number of hours fathers in Nigeria and those in the United States spend with their children.

Methods

Data presented in this study was extracted from the larger IEA Preprimary Study Phase I. The project involves an assessment of the contributions that out-of-home care and other socialization settings make to child development. The U.S. data was collected by High Scope Educational Research Foundation in 1988. Under the project population definition all the families with a child 3 1/2 to 4 1/2 years of age, were eligible for the interview. This covered all four U.S. census regions including urban and rural sites. All major racial and cultural groups were included in the equal probability sampling design. The achieved sample included 432 families selected from 11 communities. Out of this total sample, 69 families (16%) were African American families[1]. 49% of the mothers in the American sample were working; 75% were married. The Nigerian data was collected by the Institute of Education, University of Ibadan in 1988. The total sample of 1251 families with 3 1/2 to 4 1/2 year old children was selected from 5 states (Oyo, Anambra, Borno, Sokoto, Plateau) representative of the whole country. 62% of the mothers worked outside the home; 88% were married. The sample scheme design was a multi-stage, stratified sample in both urban and rural areas.

Instrument

The survey instrument, the Parent Guardian Interview (PGQ) contains detailed questions about family's access to and use of both formal and informal child care settings. There are also questions about family and child care site backgrounds. The PGQ section on the Daily Routine of the Child is relevant to this article . It requires an examination of the care experiences of the child in a typical day. It asks for detailed hour by hour information about where (care setting) the target

[1] For more information on Sampling Procedure; contact High Scope Educational Research Foundation, 600 North River Street, Ypsilanti, MI 48198 (313) 485-2000

child is and who the caregiver is that is caring for the child, during each hour of a 'typical day'. Data regarding who the child's main caregiver[2] is and the location of the care site was collected for 24 hours. However, computation of the hours that different care persons spend with the child and the location of the care setting, was done using the 16 hour period (6 a.m. - 10 p.m.) referred to as 'Child Awake Time'. It assumes that the average child spends about 8 hours sleeping in his parents home, and no interactive caring takes place while the child is sleeping on a typical day.

Findings: Parental Involvement (Quality Time) with Child as Caregiver

This study examined the numbers of hours a child spends with different caregiving adults on a typical day. The focus of the study is on parents commitment of time to child care. Results (Table 1) show that out of the 16 hours an average child is awake, the typical child in the Nigerian and American sample spends most of his time with the mother. The typical American child spends the longer period (10 hours 42 minutes). This means that on a typical day, the mother meets the needs of the child more than 60% of the time in both cultural settings. What about fathers? On a typical day, an average father in the Nigerian and American household spends less than one hour (42 minutes each) with the child. This means that the child spends less than 5% of his awake time with the father. On the other hand, the mother spends 10 hours, more than the father, as a child caregiver on a typical day. The table also shows the amount of time a typical child spends with other adult caregivers in a typical day. In the American context, the teacher (if the child attends an organized care or educational setting) is an even more important caregiver, than the father. Because of the high cost of institutionalized child care for many Nigerian families, the teacher is not as important as might be expected. On the other hand, a non-relative in the household, e.g. maid or nanny is a more important caregiver to the Nigerian child than the father. Surprisingly, grandparents are not as important as might be expected.

Table 2 shows the settings for child care. Since the mother is the most important child care provider in this sample, where is she so engaged? Nowadays, child care takes place in a familial or an extra-familial setting. Family settings include the child's own home, the grandparent's home,

[2] Main caregiver refers to the adult who is responsible for meeting the needs of the child at the time. In a familial care setting, e.g. the child's own home, the caregiver could be child's mother, father, grandparent, sibling, etc. A care setting is a place where a child spends a minimum of 2 hours a day.

Table 1

Grand Mean of Hours Child Spends with Different Caregivers in the U.S. and Nigeria in a Typical Day

Hours (16 hours of Child Awake Time)

	U.S.		Nigeria	
Caregiver	Mean Hours	%	Mean Hours	%
Mother	10.7	66.8	10.0	62.5
Father	0.7	4.3	0.7	4.3
Both Parents	0.9	5.6	1.0	6.2
Siblings	0.1	0.6	0.7	4.3
Grandparents	0.5	3.1	0.2	1.2
Other Relatives	0.2	1.2	0.3	1.8
Friend/Neighbor	0.1	0.6	0.2	1.2
Someone (other person e.g. maid, daycare worker)	1.0	6.2	1.8	11.2
*Teacher	1.8	11.2	0.5	3.1
Nobody	0.0	---	0.2	1.2
Missing	---	---	0.4	2.5

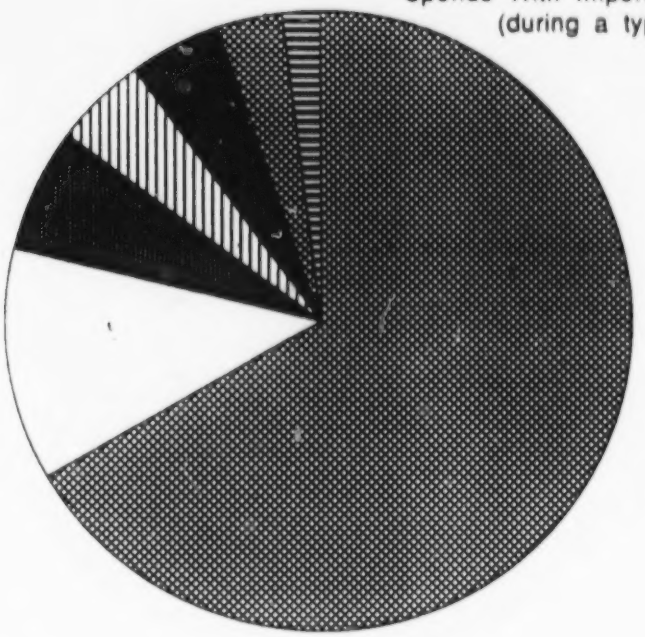
etc. Extra-familial care settings include daycare centers, family daycare homes, preschools, etc.

* (The adult [usually paid] in charge of the child in such a setting is referred to as teacher in Table 1).

Table 2 reveals that among Nigerian and American families child care is mainly carried out in the child's own home more than 75% of the time. Table 1 indicates that both parents perform the duties of child care jointly for approximately one hour in a typical day. (See Figures 1 and 2). The most important caregiving parent-the mother, spends more than 10 hours a day (probably isolated from other adults) at home with the child. In the American context, extra-familial settings: family daycare homes and preschool settings are important. Parent's workplace is very important in Nigeria because women in sales and agricultural occupations usually take their children along.

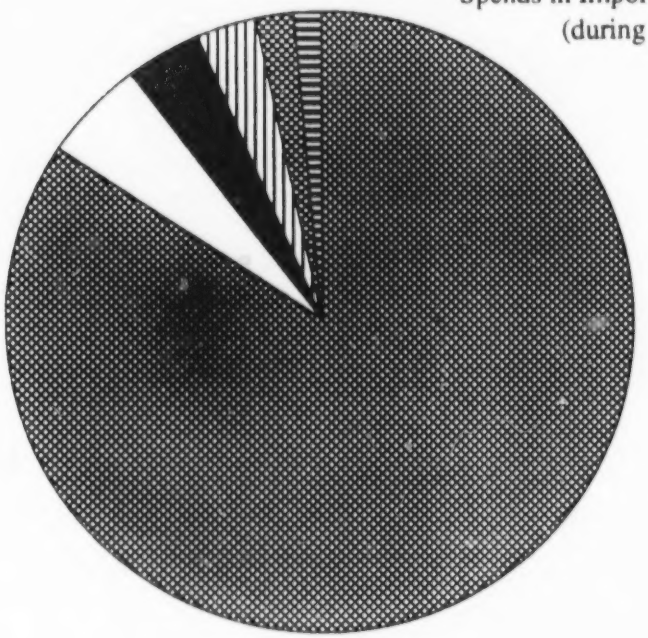
From both Tables 1 & 2, it is evident that mothers spend much longer hours at home

Percentage of Time an Average Nigerian Child
Spends With Important Caregivers .
(during a typical day)



Mother	62.5%
Maid	11.2%
Both Parents	6.2%
Father	4.3%
Siblings	4.3%
Teacher	3.1%
Relatives	1.8%

Percentage of Time an Average Nigerian Child
Spends in Important Care Settings .
(during a typical day)



At Home	81.2%
Other Home (N.R.)	5.0%
School	3.7%
Relatives	3.1%
Parent's Workplace	1.8%
Playground	1.2%

Percentage of Time an Average American Child
Spends With Important Caregivers
(during a typical day)

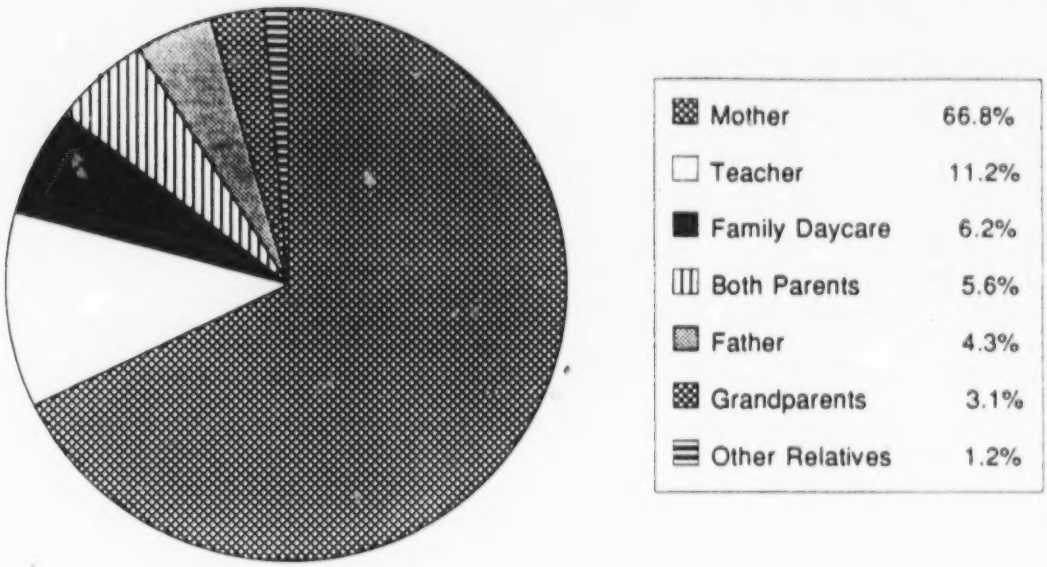


Figure 1

Percentage of Time an Average American Child
Spends in Important Care Settings
(during a typical day)

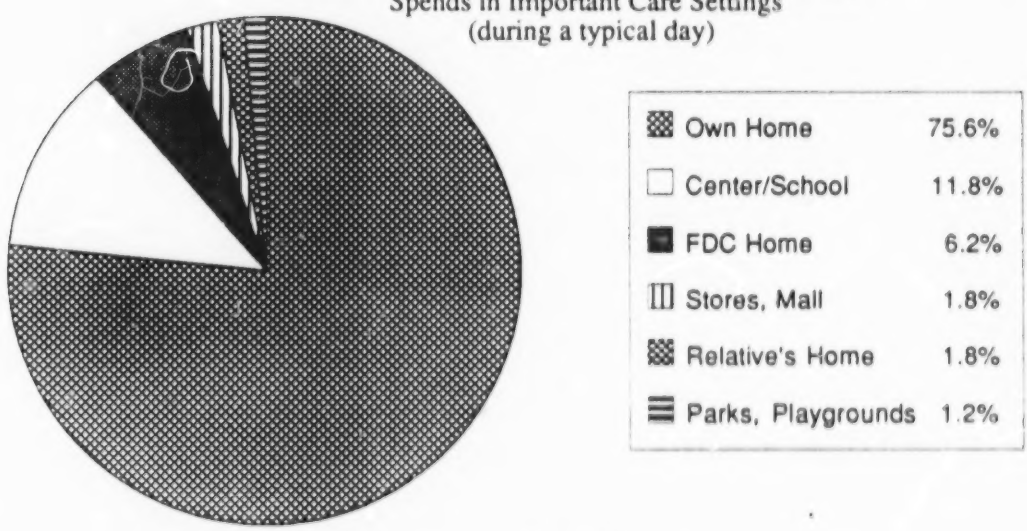


Figure 2

Table 2

Grand Mean of Hours Child Spends at Various Caresettings in a Typical Day

(16 hours of Child Awake Time)

	U.S.		Nigeria	
Caresetting	Mean Hours	%	Mean Hours	%
Home	12.1	75.6	13.0	81.2
Relatives Home	0.3	1.8	0.5	3.1
Neighbor/Friend's Home	0.1	0.6	0.8	5.0
Family Daycare Home	1.0	6.2	0.1	0.6
School	1.9	11.8	0.6	3.7
Parent's Workplace	0.0	0.0	0.3	1.8
Park, Playground, Street	0.2	1.2	0.2	1.2
Store/Public Building	0.3	1.8	0.0	0.0
Transitor	0.1	0.6	0.0	0.0
Missing	---	---	0.5	3.1

providing child care services than fathers. In both Nigeria and the U.S. samples the job of childcare is a sex specific duty entrusted mainly to the mother. In comparison, the amount of time the other parent (the father) spends with the child appears negligible.

Discussion

Data presented in this study indicates that mothers are much more involved in child care than fathers and other important adults in the child's life. This finding is consistent with the observation that even in these post modern times, the basic traditional pattern of division of labor according to gender still operates in families, especially in child care roles. The pattern is the same in American and Nigerian households. It appears that mothers in Africa and in the diaspora have similar problems to cope with, it is therefore necessary to close ranks so that this form of sexism can be addressed and eradicated.

This paper provides empirical evidence that requires translation to fresh policies and actions that should redistribute child care duties within the household. Since society, in general, and

fathers specifically, do not recognize or at best take women's preoccupation with child care for granted and since fathers are usually the policy makers, new policies need to be formulated.

Reasons why the traditional child care pattern should change

Psychological Perspective: From the developmental point of view, child care is work because the child is not passive. The child can and actually modifies parental behavior. Children have 'stimulus value'. Rheingold observed this bidirectional effect and stated it succinctly: "so aversive especially to humans is the crying of the infant that there is almost no effort one will not expend, no device one will not employ, to change a crying baby into a smiling one - or just a quiet one." In the same vein, Feshback painted the picture of a "provoked parent" thus: "parents are not immune to their children's behavior. Their response to a particular act may be influenced by the history of their interaction with the child. The parent who uses severe punishment might have begun with soft words, which failed to achieve their objective of aggressive control." These observations show the amount of stress a child could exert on a parent. While the possible contribution of the child's effects on parents is not the subject of this paper, one may deduce that child care could be burdensome, if the profound affect a child exerts on adults is not shared between both parents and if possible other adults. Moreover, it could be dangerous for the life of a child to be formed under constant mother-child dyad. Children benefit socially intellectually and emotionally when they are exposed to the company of other children and adults especially fathers.

Father's Perspective: Fatherhood involves more than being a financial provider. It requires an active involvement in the molding of the personality of the child. Fathers should share the burdens and joys of children, sacrificing time and energy, because their own well being is enhanced when they take active responsibility for the health, welfare and balanced growth of their children. This is fatherhood and fathers should not be denied this satisfying experience.

Mother's Perspective: Mothers need time for child care, however; many mothers nowadays believe that child care work is still compatible with engagement in other adult interests such as paid work. Experiences show that, insulated at home for lengthy periods, many mothers are susceptible to personal, social and environmental stress. Research indicates that full-time mothers

often complain of loneliness and isolation. Because of these reasons, urgent redistribution is required in the time that parents allocate to child care. The recommendations in this paper are based on the progressive approach to social policy. It assumes that it is the obligation of both men and women to support themselves as well as jointly share in the responsibilities of parenthood.

Family - Responsive Policies and Actions

Employer - Support Activities: Where women constitute a substantial part of the labor force, a direct way of reducing the time a mother spends at home doing child care jobs is for working parents to actively demand progressive family oriented policies, whereby employers are forced to see parents as individuals and as family members. An example of a family-responsive policy is the employer-supported child care arrangement. Employer - supported child care refers to a situation in which an employer, a group of employers, or a labor union takes some initiative in meeting employees child care needs and bears some or all of the cost. (Governor's Advisory Committee, 1981)

An employer may provide any of these services:

1). Direct Services: actual spaces such as on an offsite day care centers, consortium centers, family day care networks, after school programs, holiday camps

2). Information: about referral services, parent education

3). Financial Assistance: flexible benefits, corporate contributions to existing child care agencies and programs, vouchers, vendor arrangements and

4). Alternative work scheduling: flexible time, part-time, job sharing, and flexible parental leave policies.

Unlike the existing work policies that ignore the fact that women are also mothers, employer assisted child care offers significant relief to women since they do not have to worry about "how" their children will be cared for. Auerbach predicts that women will be able to concentrate more on work, be absent less frequently and invest more in their employers. Many employers in the U.S. support one or some of these programs. Employers in Africa are urged to provide such services. Employer-supported child care is a first step toward the reorganization of

both family and work life as it gives parents a range of choices: whether to work at all, to work full-time or to work part-time.

Direct Government Intervention: As Kamerman argues, more government and corporate support is needed for "fathers in their nurturant and caretaking roles and for mothers in their economic roles" if the wellbeing of children is to be ensured. Women and men in policy making positions need to formulate policies and lobby their state and federal representatives to sponsor bills that prescribe benefits to support or benefit parenting. The benefit could be in the form of adequate financial support to a parent, in order to obviate the need for paid employment and allow the parent to receive some tangible reward for child care services. Italy and Sweden have parental leave policy designed to eliminate the traditional gender based division of labor. A social policy granting parental leaves to fathers will enable them to act out their caretaking roles. Indirectly, cash transfers to parents can be made through the tax system. Tax reduction or tax credits could be devised for costs of child care. Again, government sponsored child care programs may provide cheaper, reliable and accessible services for parents irrespective of work status. Intensified child health services (such as free check-ups, immunizations, family health care visitors providing expert advice, support and referral systems to parents) will ameliorate the burden of child care on mothers in particular. It is time for women to demand statutory provisions for flex-time or part-time employment, and flexible work pace arrangements in order to accommodate their child care roles.

Some fathers need more information on child care. It is recommended that school systems expand their curriculum to accommodate child care courses especially at the high school level. Colleges and universities should organize general courses on parenting. The media has been playing a commendable role by publishing articles that have the potential of changing attitudes to child care. There is a proliferation of child care magazines, T.V. and radio programs, posters, books, leaflets, and stickers encouraging fathers to participate more actively in child care. Women groups could organize training workshops on child care for adults in their community. In order to relieve mothers in their child care roles family daycare homes could be organized in each

neighborhood so that mothers know that help is available to them when they need someone else to care for their children. The women's group organizing such a care facility could apply to the appropriate government agency for financial and material support.

One reliable way of relieving mothers from child care duties is for women to live in extended family arrangements (doubling-up). Such extended family and kinship networks provide a social assistance system that supplements mothers' efforts. It is also likely that the presence of other adults in the household will enhance the quality of life for mothers especially if these adults assume some of the household's domestic and economic responsibilities. Research indicates that another adult in the household who will assist with child care and other household duties may provide the opportunity for a single parent with a young child to pursue education goals and obtain employment outside the home.

Informal Support Networks

Use of informal helper networks is also possible. Mothers could socialize with other mothers in the block, community, or in the church. Mothers could organize to offer each other company, support and mutual help as mothers' child care beliefs and practices are monitored by their peers. Friendly neighbors provide back up services when a mother has an emergency to cope with. Church members provide a critical source of support among blacks generally. Apart from providing spiritual and emotional support, members could use church facilities as setting for daycare, play group, or a nursery. Such child care is usually cheaper and sometimes better organized than other private institutions.

This paper has used some data from an international study to highlight the role of mothers in child care. Women are defined first as mothers, therefore they are naturally expected to give themselves to child care duties in the home. Thus, it was calculated that mothers in Nigeria and the U.S. spend more than 10 out of 16 hours (child awake time) with their children as main caregivers in their homes at least 75% of the time. Such a heavy involvement on the part of mothers alone could be deleterious to the child, the father and the mother. This article discussed strategies that will facilitate the reorganization of child care in families so that mothers whether working at home or in the public domain will enjoy a more fulfilled life, choose suitable work patterns, and make

and sustain labor market commitments. Some of the strategies involve making family-responsive policies on paternal leave, making direct financial payment to parents while engaged in child care, making provisions for public child care and health services. Employer assisted child care, child care training for old and prospective dads, use of media facilities, involvement of extended family and informal social networks are recommended as strategies that have the potential of releasing mothers from the burden of child care.

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